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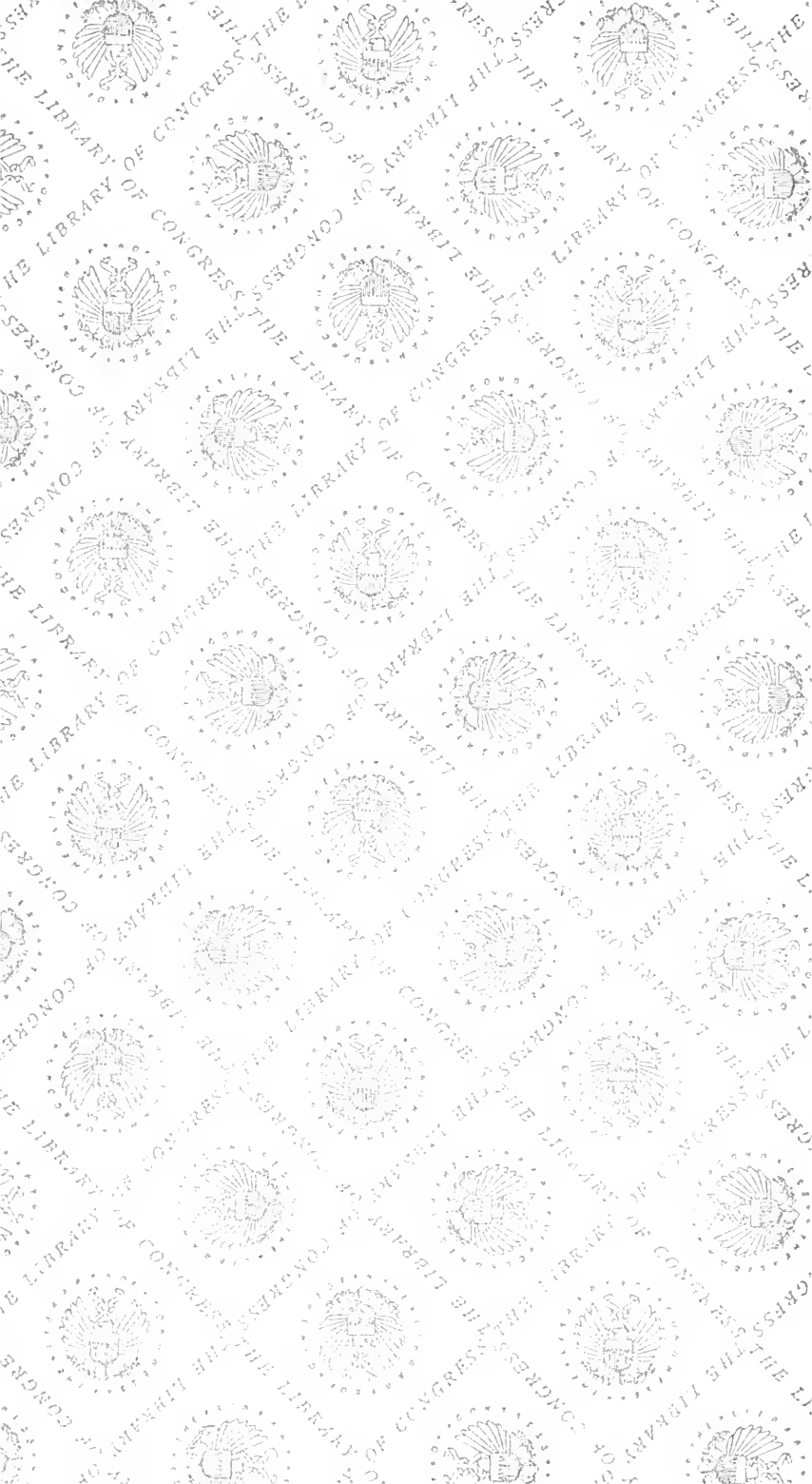
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ON  
AMERICAN  
MORALS AND MANNERS.

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BY REV. ORVILLE DEWEY, D. D.

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Reprinted from the Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany

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BOSTON:  
WILLIAM CROSBY,  
118 WASHINGTON STREET.  
1844.

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ON

## AMERICAN MORALS AND MANNERS.

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WE propose to offer some observations in this article on American morals and manners. There is, at this moment, a very extraordinary crisis of opinion in Europe with regard to this country. Our national character is not only brought into question, but it is brought into question as furnishing grounds for a decision upon the form of our Government, upon the great cause of Republican institutions.

For reasons then, deeper than those which concern our national reputation, — and yet this is not indifferent, — this subject deserves attention. We have no desire to overrate the importance of this country; but it is undoubtedly the great embodiment of the leading principle on which the history of the world is to turn for many years to come. When at some future time a philosophical history of the present age shall be written, this country will occupy a place in it, the very converse of that which it now holds in the thoughts of most men in the Old World. That future time will far better understand the map of human affairs, not to say our literal geography, than does the present. It will be seen that the tree of freedom, planted on this Western continent, has shot its roots and fibres through the whole of Europe; beneath the soil of all her ancient and venerable institutions. Whether it shall stand and flourish and lend strength to the world; or whether, overturned by whelming floods, it shall draw the world down with it, or leave it rent and torn by the disruption of its ties — this is the question. We are not to be told that we

are now speaking great words with little meaning. Those ties, we affirm, exist. The humbler classes in Europe may know definitely but little about us. But from out of this unknown world, from beyond the dim and spreading curtain of the sea, has come to them a story that they will never forget. They have heard first of a people who can eat the fruit of an unentailed soil, of their own soil; and we can testify from observation, that that word, *ownership*, is like a word of magic to them. They have heard, next, of a people who can read; to whom is unrolled the mysterious page of knowledge, the lettered wisdom of all mankind. Yes, and they are demanding and gaining that boon, that American privilege, from their own Governments. They have heard, once more, of a people, who are their own governors, who make their own laws and execute them, and whom no man with impunity can wrong or oppress. Yes, in the lowliest cabins of Europe, they have learned all this. Let all the crowned powers of the world unteach it, if they can. This is no dream to them; it is a fact. There is example for it. And this one example is of more weight than all the books of theory that have been written from the time of Plato to this day.

The great controversy of the age, we have said in a former article, is the controversy about freedom. To put it in a more exact and practical form, it is a question about Government. How men shall govern themselves, or whether they can govern themselves at all, or, in other words, by what forms they are best governed; this is the question. And it is a momentous question. A good-natured easiness, or philosophic indifference upon this point; the sage dictum — of Dr. Johnson or of any body else — that happiness is about the same under all Governments; we cannot understand at all. We know that there are deeper things than Government, affecting men's welfare; but we say, this, nevertheless, affects it. Nay, and it has an influence, in many ways, upon those deeper things — sentiments, morals, modes of thought, views of life, the cheerfulness and hopefulness of life. If "oppression makes a wise man mad," it often makes a whole people worse than mad — unprincipled, immoral, and stupid or frivolous. If a single bad man in high station may corrupt many, what extended and blighting shadow over a country must be



cast by the enthroned image of wrong ! It dishonors and degrades, it vexes and demoralizes a people. Besides, Government either helps or hinders individual development. It expands or contracts the whole man ; for it touches his freedom, education, religion. It concerns not only the man's virtue, but the man's manhood. Unless we were to say, as we might more justly, that virtue, rightly construed, *is* the manhood of man.

From these reasons, as well as from man's natural right to be free, has arisen the conviction in all liberal and generous minds, that the freest Government, compatible with human safety, is to be preferred to all others.

Now of such a Government, the *freest* in the world at least, America has given an example. The eyes of the world were directed to it. Could it succeed ? If it could, it was virtually an answer to every argument for political wrong ; for absolute monarchy, for primogeniture, for legitimacy in all its forms. Could it succeed ? More than sixty years of success it has counted ; no nation on earth has been in a happier condition, none more flourishing in affairs, more correct in morals, more submissive to law, or more loyal to its government. Sixty, nay, nearly seventy years have passed over a nation, experiencing, meanwhile, all the vicissitudes of peace and war, and of commercial prosperity and adversity, and still it has a being ; it has not faded away like a Utopian dream from these blessed shores ; it is no mushroom empire ; it stands firm and strong. And yet now, at this late hour, all at once, this experiment is distrusted and discredited throughout the whole of Europe.

✱It is certainly a very remarkable crisis in public opinion, and, on every account, demands attention. If this present distrust is a mere freak or whim of the public mind, that character should be fixed upon it. If it arises from misapprehension, the error should be promptly exposed. If there are any just grounds for it, most especially does it concern us in America to know it.

Let us then look carefully into the case of America, with reference to this distrust. What are the grounds of it ? And how far are they sustained, if they are sustained at all, by the facts ? What is there in this American nation — a great nation ; consisting of many millions of people ; pros-

perous, peaceful, happy ; free, powerful, and respectable, we hope — what is there that justifies any alarmist, any croaker, in saying that the great experiment of this people in government is coming to nought, or that can warrant foreign writers, who should feel that they have a reputation to preserve, in speaking of this country in terms of gross indignity and ribald scorn ?

The first charge that we shall examine, since at present it stands foremost of all, is that of the repudiation of public debts.

It is not easy to understand the feeling of all Europe on this point, without coming into actual contact with it. On a late visit to the Old world, we were amazed to observe the length to which this charge of repudiation is carried. Perpetually, without one single exception among all the persons who addressed us, we were approached with an air and tone of sympathy for the sad case of America. The conversation usually ran in this manner. “A terrible thing this, in America !” “What thing ?” we said. “Why, this repudiation, you know.” “But who has repudiated ?” “Who ? Why ! the States, all the States, or the most of them ; it is the doctrine now in America.” “Nay, sir,” was our reply, “let us understand this matter, if you please, before we proceed any farther. We say that the States have not repudiated their debts. We say that there is no such thing as repudiation in America, except in regard to limited portions of the debts of two of the States where the just obligation to pay is denied. Michigan alleges, that as certain monies which she proposed to borrow, never found their way into her treasury, she is not obliged in good faith to reimburse the lender. Mississippi contends, that she is not not legally nor honestly bound to pay certain bonds, because they were sold and were bought in known violation of the very condition on which they were issued. We do not say that these are sufficient grounds of defence. We think that the acts of the authorized agents of a State, should bind the State. But still we say, that neither of these is an act of open, unblushing repudiation. There is no such thing in America. We believe, there never can be. It is a case, not of repudiation, but of simple bankruptcy. The States cannot pay at present ; is that a crime ?” “But they can pay,” was the reply often made.

“They can lay a direct tax, for the purpose of paying the interest at least. Or, at any rate, they could come forward and relieve the public mind by saying that they acknowledge their liability, and mean in due time to meet it. They knew that suspicions were flung upon their good faith, and they have done nothing to remove them.” “Consider,” we said in reply, “how little the mass of the people are apt to feel themselves implicated in the acts of the Government. They hear that there is a deficit in the treasury; they suppose that it will be supplied in some way, without ever suspecting that their honor is compromised or that their intervention is necessary. Nor does it materially alter the case, that ours is a republican or representative government. It is a way of thinking that long since came into the world, with regard to the action of all Governments. The public conscience does not feel itself responsible for the acts or neglects of Government. We wish it did, among ourselves. We are willing to hear any thing that tends to elevate the public conscience. And in this view, we could wish that either of the two things before suggested had been done; that is to say, either that the voice of the people had demanded a direct tax, or a most open and formal profession of a purpose to pay. But the question now is; does the failure to do one or the other of these things indicate a want of principle among the people, a willingness that the debt should never be paid? Would any other people have aroused themselves—the English or the French—to meet a case like this? Would they not have said, ‘The government will provide; the thing will right itself in due time?’ Would not the affair have been a parcel of the national budget, rather than a part of the national conscience?”

We think indeed that the Governments of the delinquent States ought to have come forward in the late crisis, when their bonds were dishonored in every market in the world, and to have said, ‘We hold the public faith and honor to be sacred, and we firmly believe and fully intend that these debts shall be paid.’ This the suffering bond-holders had a right to demand, at the least; and they did demand it. They said, and they still say, ‘You cannot pay; be it so; you say that you cannot lay a direct tax to pay the interest on these bonds; that it is a time of universal and unparal-

leled distress in your country ; that the people of the delinquent States have land, have wheat, have everything, but money ; be it so ; but yet *say* something to us ; say that you mean to pay ; that will satisfy us for the present ; that will relieve the panic which is sweeping down us and our families by hundreds, to poverty and misery.' Why did not the State authorities in question, meet this call ? Why do they not meet it now ? We ask this question with unspeakable concern and pain. We can conceive of no answer to it that ought to satisfy anybody. It must be want of care, of courage, or of principle. That it should be want of principle ; that our public functionaries are willing violaters of their plighted faith, sworn oath-breakers, we choose to consider and we do consider impossible. A carelessness, we conceive ; a feeling of not being responsible, too apt to be the feeling of public men in distinction from that of private men, and increased here by constant rotation in office ; the feeling, in short, which says, '*I* did not borrow this money, and I am no more responsible in regard to it than every man around me ;' all this may be the explanation, in part, of this great neglect, as it seems to us, of public duty. It is very well known that, in England, as well as in America, successive administrations do not feel responsible for the acts of the last, as if they were their own. It is very easy to see that if our States had, each of them, a permanent head, a prince or king, the sense of responsibility, in such a crisis, would be far more binding.

Still we must confess that this reasoning, though it may explain something, is, in such a case by no means satisfactory. But is this enough even to explain the case ? Must there be something more ? Can it be that our State authorities have distrusted the honesty of the people, have doubted whether in the simple admission that the debt is binding, they would be supported by public sentiment, have feared, that if they spoke the honest word, they should lose their dishonest places ? Then before Heaven do we say it, we believe, that they do not *know* the people whom they canvass ! It is not true that the people of this country, if the honest part were truly placed before them, would reject it. It cannot, it shall not, it must not, be true. In strict faith and conscience, we believe it is not. If we thought

it were, if we ever were brought to that terrible conclusion, if we believed this nation to be a false and dishonest nation, we should fold our arms in despair ; we should lift our eyes to heaven and say, ‘ God ! give us another country ! We have no country ; give us some far land, some distant shore, where faith is kept and truth abides ; for we have no more a country ! ’ We trust we shall be believed when we say, that this is no language of rhetoric. It has been lately said in a printed letter, that “ *Indiana will certainly repudiate.* ” We do not believe it. But if it were true, hopelessly true, and if we were a citizen of Indiana, we would leave that State without delay. We would not breathe its air one moment beyond the time that we had power to leave it.

We can believe that this is a subject on which the public conscience is not yet sufficiently aroused, without losing our confidence in the people. We can believe that the public mind is, to some degree, sophisticated, on this subject. There have been some novel speculations spread among the people, designed to show that governments have no right to contract debts ; that the present generation has no right to bind the future ; and much has been made in Europe of the circumstance, that one of the public functionaries of the State of New York has lent his countenance to such a doctrine ; a doctrine, which, whether true or false, becomes, at any rate, dishonest, the moment it is made to apply to debts already contracted. There is a feeling, too, among the people that these debts have been rashly contracted ; that the public works on which these loans have been expended, are of little or no service to them ; that millions have been thrown away upon useless canals, and that it is hard they should now be heavily taxed for these bootless enterprises. Add to this, the general feeling of irresponsibleness for what the Government does ; and it is easy to see in what a different light this case may present itself, from that of direct personal liability.

It is not strange, perhaps, that the creditor in Europe does not, or will not, see this difference. He addresses the State that is indebted to him — Pennsylvania, for instance — just as if it were a private individual.\* He says, ‘ You

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\* See the Letters of the Reverend Sydney Smith.

can pay ; you are rich at this moment ; you can pay ; you will not pay ; you are revelling in “ the luxury of dishonesty ; ” you never will pay.’ He feels disposed, if he meets a Pennsylvanian at dinner in London, to seize upon him, strip him, and in a sort of symbolical retaliation to divide his apparel among the guests ; his coat to one, his boots to another, and his watch to a third. — If any body wants the benefit of this lash, let them have it. If this irony can do any good, let it, in Heaven’s name ! But still, we must say, that it is more amusing than reasonable. Suppose the Afghian people should retort in this way upon the Reverend satirist — could they catch him — because his *Government* had done them some harm. Suppose the Chinese should smother him in a chest of opium, because his people persisted in smuggling the article into their country. Nay, and we cannot quite admire the taste with which these English writers come forth to teach and reprimand this country — something as if they had birch in hand for this great republican boy on the other side of the water. But to be serious ; is all this wise or just ? Multitudes in Pennsylvania, and in all the indebted States, are most anxious that this matter should be fairly adjusted. But they find that this cannot be done in a moment. A whole people must be aroused to the payment of a government debt. Such a thing was never done before in the world ; and we doubt whether it *can* be done anywhere else. We doubt whether the public debt of England would stand the tide of universal suffrage a single day. Be that as it may ; here is a Pennsylvanian — let us suppose — laboring and hoping and believing that all may be brought right. In the meantime would the Reverend accuser have him eaten up at a dinner in London ? We cannot sympathize with his wit. With us it a matter too great and grave to raise a laugh about. We are sorry for his anger too ; for it has certainly cost him sixty per cent on his investment. He says he has sold his stock at forty per cent. He says it, as if he had washed his hands of it. “ Haste makes waste.” If he had waited a little, he might have had a hundred.

At the same time, we freely say that to any, not petulant but calm and solemn remonstrance of this gentleman, whose talent we admire, whose writings we delight in, we would give all the aid in our humble power. We do not regret

that he should use his powerful pen to awaken the public conscience in this country. We would that many pens should be employed in this cause. Yes, and with all our heart, let them point to that magnificent State of Pennsylvania, — key-state she is called ; key-state she is ; and never did more depend on her than now ! There is a voice from her western border which has thrilled through the hearts of thousands — the noble manifesto of the Pittsburg “ Franklin Association.” Honor and success to it ! Let the capital answer to that voice ! Let the river echo to the mountains, that great motto — “ Franklin and Honesty ! ” We would indeed there were public meetings called in all our cities to consider this solemn crisis in our national morals, to pour out eloquent indignation upon the bare thought of public delinquency ; to do all that is possible to wipe off the dishonor that is cast upon us in the face of all Europe !

There is, in fact, an effort to be made in this country, of which we think our people are not yet fully aware. This matter of our public indebtedness must not be left to take care of itself. The country must be aroused. It must come to be distinctly understood, that here is no ordinary work to be done. A whole people must be brought to feel the obligation of a public engagement. We have assigned some reasons to show why this does not come home to the private and individual conscience. But it must be brought home there. Our only help lies in individual conviction. Every merchant, every mechanic, every farmer must be made to feel that this obligation presses like a private debt, upon his ware-house, his workshop, his land. The truth is, a new kind of national conscience is to be called into being here. The people of these States, paying immense debts, which press upon them in the form of government loans, paying them by a voluntary effort, as they will do, will present a moral spectacle never before seen in the world. The principle that will do this, lies, we firmly believe, in the heart of these communities ; but it is to be quickened into life and roused into action. And this *must* be done. We must not admit nor consent that anything else is possible. Shall the blight of bad faith be upon our fields and streams and mountains, as an everlasting curse and shame ? Shall this

canker be suffered to remain in the very root of all our prosperity and hope? Shall this terrible precedent stand in the national history of millions of free, prosperous and intelligent people? Shall this be the heritage of dishonor that is to go down from us to our posterity? And shall the nations as they pass by our borders say, ‘Aha! these are the people that talked of liberty and justice and human rights; but they never paid their debts!’ Heaven forbid! We neither admit nor consent, nor believe that this is possible!

The second charge brought against us, is that of an excessive and demoralizing love and pursuit of gain.

To meet the full extent of the distrust that is felt of this country and of its institutions on pecuniary grounds, it is necessary to take a larger view, than that of temporary repudiation. There are other accusations connected with this larger view. It is said that the entire national mind of this country is corrupted by the pursuit of wealth; that in the absence of hereditary distinctions, this is the main title to consideration among us, and that to gain it, has become the one passion of our people; that from this cause has come in a flood of bankruptcies, failures, frauds; that we have become the most dishonest people in the world; and in fine, that our great political experiment is wrecked upon a rock of gold; — or rather, of what we thought was gold, but which has turned out to be no better than worthless slate.

Let us observe in passing, that the failure of the United States Bank, being, as it was strictly after the withdrawal of the national charter, a private corporation, no more involves the moral credit of our people, than the failure of a bank at Leeds or Manchester, does that of the English people. But let us proceed to the general allegation.

That, as a people at large, we are a money-seeking people beyond all others, we do not deny. That the pursuit of property carries us too far, and is the cause of many mistakes and evils among us, we do not deny. But with regard to the opprobrium attached to this national trait, we must ask for some candid reflection.

It must be remembered then, that there never was a people to whom the paths of acquisition were so widely opened as the people of this country. In Europe, entail



on the land and capital in the manufactories, hold the mass of property from general possession. The laboring classes, generally, are tenants at will, or toilers for a bare subsistence. To have a competence, an independence however humble, is a thing entirely beyond their reach and thought. In this country, this boon, or the hope of it at least, is held out to all. Can it be expected that any people will be indifferent to such a blessing? We are not surprised that the first developement of the unobstructed free principle, is the eager pursuit of property. Noble ones are to follow, are following already; but it was natural, it was inevitable, that this should be the first. A man were a fool, and not a rational being, if, when the chance is offered him of providing for his own declining days or for the future wants of his family, he should fold his hands in transcendental wisdom or plebeian stupidity, and say that he did not care for property.

Nor do we admit all that is charged, of bad consequences from the pursuit of worldly goods. We will come in a moment to our late commercial disasters. But first we deny in general, that the common possession of this great heritage of opportunity, has had the effect alleged, to vulgarize, degrade and corrupt the public mind. This wide diffusion of property tends to make a generous people. We certainly are not a hoarding people. Our expenditures are free enough in all conscience, we need not say; but we must say, since we are put upon this ungrateful argument, that our charities too are free. And we wish that our British accusers, in particular, would think now and then, amidst their reproaches, of the thousands and ten thousands of their own poor, whom we annually relieve. They come in shoals every week, every day, to our shores; sometimes, we are told, actually shipped off from the alms-houses of England in utter helplessness by the public authorities; they crowd our own alms-houses; they besiege our doors in all the cities of our sea-board; and we verily believe that, in the long run, we are to give to the poor of Great Britain more than the amount of all the debts we owe her! We *can* do it; and a good many things more; and pay the debt besides; and *shall* — such is our assured faith.

But again, we doubt whether the eagerness for gain, though circumstances have made it more general here, is, by any means, so intense as it is in the higher circles of Europe. There is nothing here to compare with the rigid grasp of entail ; with the inhumanity, the unnatural cruelty and injustice, that looks around upon a circle of children alike loving and entitled to love, and says, ‘ penniless shall ye all be, but this, my eldest ; dependent shall ye all be upon him ; in order that our family may be great.’ They say that we have no birth-distinctions here to honor. But how long will the birth-distinction last without the wealth-distinction ? The law of primogeniture answers. No, no ; the great name must be graven on a plate of gold, or it will wear out. The possessors of rank will not be the men to set a light value upon the wealth that sustains it.

This close alliance, too, must give wealth, with the *mass of the people*, increased influence and power. And we verily believe, strange as the assertion may be thought, that opulence is a surer title to respect in Europe than it is in America. Beside its association with rank, it is a rarer thing there, than it is here. And from both causes, it can surround itself with homages there, which here it would seek for in vain. We are *certain*, that the *poor* man in America stands a better chance of receiving the consideration and respect that are due to him, than in Europe. The Old world is full of arrangements that visibly assign to him an humbler place and accommodation. The forward deck of steamboats is for him ; the second class of railroad cars : the humble *fiacre* or *citadine* in the cities ; nay, the very streets tell the same tale. Till recently, in the cities of Europe the streets had no side-walks. But fifteen years ago, large quarters in Paris did not possess one side-walk. And the language of all this was as plain, as if the words had been formed in the very paving-stones ; ‘ these streets were built solely for the convenience of the rich who ride in carriages, and not for the poor who walk.’ Yes, and the rapid increase of side-walks in the cities as plainly proclaims the onward march of more just and liberal principles. The barricades in Paris did not tell a plainer tale.

But let us come to the season of our late commercial disasters. This, in the view of many foreign observers, has plunged the moral and political hope of the country into

utter ruin. Let us look at the case. In a thriving country, of vast and unexplored resources, amidst an enterprising population, to whose whole mass were opened the courses of boundless competition, there grew up gradually, from various causes, an honest conviction of the increased value of all property. We were living in a new age, in a new world, amidst new and untried fortunes; prosperity, such as the world perhaps had never known, was pouring its treasures into the lap of peace; human intelligence, aspiration, hope, were lifting their wings for an unbounded flight; mechanism, more than realizing the fabled stories of giants and Titans, seemed about to break through the iron barriers of necessity, and to open the regions of some fairer and happier state of being. There were distinct causes, no doubt, of the wild speculations of 1835 and 1836, but we believe that the excited spirit of the age lent them a powerful impulse. At any rate, the impulse became general, became universal. We well remember how sage and cautious men held out against it for a time. We remember too, how one after another fell in with it; till at length all yielded to the tide of opinion, and were gazing unconcerned, if not actually swimming upon this vast and tremendous Maelstrom. Speculation became, in fact, a part of the regular and accredited business of the country. It was not like the mania about the South sea and Mississippi stocks; it was not the scheme of a few; it did not wear an air of romance or phrenzy, which might well have put the prudent upon their guard; it was the trade and traffic of the many. People honestly said, 'we had not appreciated the value of our property; our houses, our lots and lands are, and are to be, worth more than we had thought; how much we know not.' Suppose, then, multitudes to have become honestly possessed with the conviction that they could make immense fortunes in a few years; and see the unprecedented force of the temptation. The fact is, that no community on earth was ever subjected to anything like the same trial. Is it strange that many sunk under it; that the sound old maxims of prudence were considered as superseded and to be laid aside; that men took risks first, then involved themselves in embarrassments; and that many, at last, fell into positive frauds? There have been sad failures on every side; not received with dishonest non-

chalance, as our foreign traducers represent; they little know the honorable minds to which they do this wrong. And there have been gigantic frauds, which have struck the heart of the whole community with salutary horror. All this we admit. But when we hear it said, ‘the great republican experiment has failed;’ we answer, no; some banks, some houses, some individuals have failed, but the country has not failed, the experiment has not failed; the heart of the people is sound. In fact, when we speak of the whole community as engaged in the late hazardous courses of business, we speak, after all, only of the trading classes; the people at large, knew nothing about it. The body of farmers and mechanics was absolutely untouched by it. And we aver and we know, concerning our people at large, and that too from some minute knowledge and extensive comparison, that there is not a more honest and virtuous people on earth. We might say more; for there is nothing among our people, to compare with the small, paltry, perpetual deception, knavery and lying that one finds everywhere on the continent of Europe. We might say more then; but thus much at least, will we say; for while on the one hand, we have no taste for flattery, on the other, we will not give up our people to unjust reproach. Conceit may be bad, but discouragement is scarcely less so; to submit passively to opprobrium is to go half-way towards deserving it; and at any rate, what we desire in the case, is absolute truth and justice — no more and no less.

The third grave charge against American morals is fixed upon the system of Slavery.

Let the charge be precisely stated. It is not that we now import slaves, or suffer them to be imported. We have declared the trade to be piracy; and were the first nation in the world to do so. The charge is, that a body of the unfortunate African race formerly introduced into this country, and which has come by inheritance into the hands of the present generation, is still held in bondage. It is an involuntary possession. It was not sought by those in whom the title now vests; it is not desired by the most of them; it was entailed upon them. And the substantive matter of the accusation is, that they do not emancipate this class immediately. Gradual emancipation has been

going on in this country from the moment that it was freed from its connection with Great Britain. Up to the time of the Abolition excitement, the discussion of such relief was freely entertained from one end of the country to the other. Let the reader remember the debates in the Virginia Legislature after the Southampton massacre, the language of Jefferson himself on this subject, and the conversations he must have held with the Southern planters, if he has taken any pains to converse with them. The charge is not, that the body of our citizens even in the slave States, approve of this system in the abstract ; not that they would now establish it ; but that they permit its existence at all, that they do not break it up immediately ; or with regard to the Northern States, it is that they are slumbering in criminal apathy over this tremendous evil and wrong. In one word, the charge is, that the national conscience is far behind that of other civilized countries. For it is not our present business to maintain that we are better than other nations, but to show that no grand demoralization has taken place under our Republican forms. This is what is now alleged in Europe, and this is what we deny.

We had prepared ourselves to make a somewhat full statement of our views of the entire Slavery question ; but we refrain from doing so at present, for two reasons. The first is, that it would swell this article beyond due bounds. And the second is, that we are unwilling on reflection to discuss the subject at large from the particular point of view at which we now stand. It places us in a false position with reference to our own sentiments. From some experience we have found, that everything we say, with a view to the defence of the national morality on this subject, is seen in a false light. We are looked upon as apologists for Slavery : a thing we can never permit.

We must content ourselves at present, therefore, with some remarks on the state of feeling existing in this country, and the judgment formed of it abroad. Are we then to say, in the first place, that this feeling is altogether right, that the public conscience is elevated or quickened to the desirable point ? It would be idle and foolish and immoral to say it. We suppose the people of this country, and especially the parties interested, feel very much as the people of England or France would, as all people will at first, in a case where

immense interests are involved, where old habitudes and prejudices are called in question, and where selfish passions are aroused by earnest discussion. And here we must still desire the reader to observe our point of view, and not to misconstrue us. Absolutely speaking, we can have no wish but to raise the public character and conscience among us, to the highest elevation possible. In this view, it is nothing to us that other nations fail; we will spread no such shield over our errors. But when it is said, that our free institutions have depraved the national character, have made us a selfish and reckless people, have made us worse than any other people, it is to the purpose, and it is but justice to the great liberal cause, to deny the charge. We are willing that other nations should exact of us more than they demand of themselves, if they please; but when the exaction is brought into this kind of argument, we think it is unfair. We freely say, that we are not satisfied with the feeling that exists in this country with regard to the stupendous immorality of the slave-system, but we must equally deny that it indicates any extraordinary degeneracy.

But, in the next place, what is the feeling in fact? The Northern States have always been opposed to Slavery; they have manumitted all their slaves long ago; they are overspread with Abolition Societies at this moment; and the writings of Channing and others, have drawn universal attention and stirred the universal conscience. Does all this look like apathy? But then it is said, that many people at the North have been exasperated by the Abolition movement. But we ask, — could this be, because they are opposed to abolition? Why, they have abolished slavery themselves! The truth is, they thought this movement dangerous to the peace of the country, to the union of the States. And then they did not like the manner and tone of the Abolitionists. They could not help their dislike perhaps; but they ought, we think, to have been more considerate than they were. They ought to have respected the pure and gentle, the courageous and self-sacrificing spirit of a man like Follen, and of others like him; and we believe they did. But at any rate their dislike of the Abolitionists was not a hostility to abolition. The hopeful idea has always been entertained in New England, that the emancipation of

which itself had set the example, would gradually spread itself over the South, till not one human creature in these States should be held in bondage. Then again, with regard to the feeling entertained at the South, we must believe that much injustice has been done to it. There are those, it is true, who defend the slave-system in its very principle, and maintain that it ought to be permanent. But we believe they are few. Many of the planters, we know, feel their situation to be a painful and irksome one, and would gladly be rid of it. But what should they have done? They saw, as they aver, that manumission, with them, did the colored man no good; that he was a worse man, and worse off for his freedom. They felt, too, that their characters were assailed with rude and cruel severity, and they were naturally indignant. This was set down, at once, to Southern pride and selfishness and inhumanity; but was it just? We have known the Southern people, as generous and hospitable and kind-hearted and courteous to a proverb; no people in the world more so; was it right to heap upon them unmeasured opprobrium and indignity, instead of approaching them as brethren, with kind and respectful reasoning; instead of mildly asking them what ought to be, and what could be done?

And indeed, what is to be done? This we say, in the third place, is the great question; and it is a difficult question; it is environed with difficulties. The way out of these difficulties is not so plain that a good conscience must needs see it at once and feel no hesitation. The example of West India emancipation has indeed relieved some doubts. The docility, the gratitude, the joy of the colored people there, and their willingness quietly to enter into new social relations, to work as freemen upon the fields which they had tilled as slaves, presented a beautiful and touching spectacle; and we rejoice at it; we thank God for it. But yet, is West India emancipation an example for us? The colored race, with us, must ever be a small and depressed minority. They can never be the dominant class, as in the West Indies. Scattered among us and yet separated from us by impassable physical, if not mental barriers; refused intermarriage, refused intercourse as equals, be it ever so unjustly; how are they ever to rise? How are they to enjoy any fair chance as men? We are

disposed to ask for them an ampler measure of relief than mere emancipation. And yet how they are to get it, except in entire removal from the country, we see not. Force, for this purpose, is out of the question ; but we have thought that, if, being emancipated, they should see it to be for their advantage to retire to Hayti or the West Indies, it would be fortunate for them ; it would be the only situation in which they could rise to their proper place as men. And we *have* doubted whether emancipation in this country, either at the North or South, has done them any good. The instances that have fallen under our particular and personal observation, go to prove the contrary. We have known communities of them, where fifty years of freedom have left them worse and worse off for it. We do not say, that they were less happy ; for we think that freedom is a boon that may compensate for the loss of almost everything beside. At the same time we hear that there are far more favorable instances than those we have examined. We are told, that in the cities of New York and Philadelphia there are communities of regular, orderly and industrious colored people, who have their churches, their schools, their charitable institutions, and among whom are far fewer poor and wretched than among the Irish emigrants. They are said to have improved very much within the last ten years. Something of this we have suspected ; and it has occurred to us that the demonstration of friendship given in the visible array of the Abolition movement, may have been of great service to them.

The question before us, we say, is one of momentous concern, and fraught with difficulty and danger. It were a comparatively easy thing to vote twenty millions, or a hundred millions, to free slaves in a distant island. And we verily believe that our difficulties would be less, if *all* the States were slave States. Then we should have one common interest. Then we might go together. Now there is a perilous altercation between the North and the South. To our apprehension it endangers the Union. Foreigners can feel little concern about it, compared with what we feel : and they may use a rough and violent language on this subject, which it would not be our wisdom to imitate.

On the whole, we think it must be apparent that this is a subject to be treated with the utmost care and con-



sideration, with the utmost Christian seriousness and moderation. We are accused abroad of a base and criminal apathy upon it. Who of us may deserve this charge we know not, but we do know many who have stood aloof from the Abolition movement, in application to whom it would be utterly and cruelly false. From our youth up, we have known the fact to be far otherwise. Twenty-five years ago — long before any Abolition Society was heard of — we knew of a private Association of gentlemen formed for the investigation of this subject.\* Often and often have we known this matter to be discussed, as the most fatal evil and peril of the country; discussed at the North with solemn deliberation, and at the South with anxieties and tears even, which should have won a consideration far different from this coarse and ferocious abuse.

It has been proclaimed abroad that our pulpit dares not speak out on this subject; that many of our clergy are Abolitionists, but have not the courage to confess it. We repel the charge with indignation. Our clergy generally, though of course opposed to Slavery, are *not* Abolitionists. Nay, and we have discussed the subject of Slavery less frequently than we otherwise might have done, because we saw, or thought we saw, that the discussion was taking a dangerous turn. Foreigners can strike in freely among us; the blow does not hurt them; they care little for our dissensions and our perils; but *we*, with their leave, must look a little more carefully after these matters. It is always found that one's neighbors can speak much more freely of his family than he can himself. They understand but little of the difficulty and delicacy of his situation. We say plainly, that we do not like the tone of *English* criticism upon us.†

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\* The writer of this article was a member of this Association.

† We do not descend so low in this allusion as to a late article, run mad with the rage for abuse, in the last London *Foreign Quarterly Review*. Nor do we refer now to its criticism on our poets. But the first few pages contain an attack upon this country of such unmeasured injustice, that we can find no words wherewith adequately to speak of it. We are sometimes tempted to ask, *is* there something coarse and brutal in the English civilization? But we check ourselves. We have seen the homes of England, and never and nowhere on earth do we expect to find more refinement, courtesy and hospitality than we have seen there. And we trust the higher mind of that country to rebuke, as they deserve, such insane ebullitions, when occupying any loftier place than the vilest newspaper, or the lowest gin-shop.

We have seen more than one rough and reckless comment upon our soberest writers on politics, like Channing and Story. They are considered as timid and time-serving. We recollect that in one of the leading Reviews, Channing was represented — the high-hearted and intrepid Channing — as “bowing and kissing hands to the public all round !” Nay, even on the subject of Slavery, he was too prudent for some. The celebrated John Foster said, when reading one of his powerful Essays, “it is very fine, but rather too much like a razor.” *He* wanted that the American champion should strike with a club. The fact is, people abroad look with a sort of speculative and curious feeling upon our discussions. They like to see the Democratic principle, as they consider it, carried out to the fullest extent, as it is in the former writings of Brownson, and of others young and rash as he was. That pleases them, amuses them. But we have something else to do in this country, besides pleasing or amusing anybody. We must be sober, if we would be wise men. We have many things to consider, that are out of the reach of trans-Atlantic eyes. We have many interests to take into the account, many powers and tendencies to hold in a careful balance. God forbid that we should set anything above the sovereign, solemn, eternal truth ! But beneath that truth we must walk reverently, soberly, humbly.

We have now considered the three heaviest charges that are brought against our national morality ; repudiation, the spirit of gain, and slavery. We might proceed to say something, if we had space, of certain disorders, private broils and violations of law, under the name of Lynch Law, which characterize the state of society in the far West. There is a certain border-land between civilization and barbarism, where personal vindication, and lawless defence of society against thieves and gamblers, sometimes take place of the regular administration of public justice. We have no defence whatever to make of these usages. We have only to say, that they are less remarkable and portentous than they appear to European eyes ; especially when it is considered that these are continually exhibited in newspaper paragraphs, instead of the general order of society which prevails in that part of the country. But the important observation to be made is, that this border land is constantly retreat-

ing before the advances of settled law and order. If it were otherwise, if this border were coming Eastward, if Lynch law and the bowie knife were gaining upon us, it were an invasion to be looked upon with unmitigated horror. But the truth is, that they are constantly driven back and are fast retreating to "their own place," the wild domain of savage life.

After all, we are not sure but the great offence of this country lies in what is *called* "a Democratic levelling of all distinctions," and in what is represented as "a consequent general vulgarity of mind and manners." Strangely enough Mr. Dickens has especially taken it to heart, to make this impression upon the people of England and upon his readers all over Europe. We do not say that he was obliged to think well of us, because we thought well of him and received him kindly. He had delighted the people of this country with his pictures of life and manners; he had provided them with what, amidst their too serious and engrossing cares, they very much wanted — a great deal of harmless amusement; he had won them by the broad and beautiful seal of humanity that is set upon his genius; and they paid him a homage which no other *people* on earth could pay. It was really a most extraordinary demonstration, creditable to both parties, indicative of great intellectual power on the one side, and of no mean share of intelligence on the other: and out of this bare fact of Mr. Dickens's reception, doing him more justice than he does himself, we could frame an argument good against more than half he says of America. We confess, under all the circumstances of the case, that we were never more at loss to account for any state of mind than for this bitterness towards America, of the popular novelist. It will not do for him to say that he is a fiction-writer and somewhat of a caricaturist. When he draws pictures of disgusting meanness and vulgarity at home, he lets the reader plainly understand that they belong to the lowest life in England. But he presents to the English and European public, pictures of a vulgarity which nobody ever saw or heard or conceived of in America, and when they walk out of the frame, lo! they are merchants of New York, Generals and landed proprietors in the West, persons holding respectable positions in society. This is no play of fiction. Speaking in his own person, he

permits himself, amidst a strain of almost insane vituperation, to use language like this concerning America: "that Republic," he says, "but yesterday let loose upon her noble course, and but to-day so maimed and lame, so full of sores and ulcers, foul to the eye and almost hopeless (?) to the sense, that her best friends turn from the loathsome creature with disgust."!! We grieve to say, that the disgust inspired by this passage must turn, we fear, upon the writer of it. Mr. Dickens might be reminded that there are other vehicles for scurrility, as it would seem, besides newspapers. We challenge him to find in the lowest of our public prints any language concerning any civilized people on earth, to compare with the passage we have just quoted. Can it be a respectable thing in England, to treat a nation with such indignity as this? We believe not. The angry novelist, as we have reason to know, is doing himself more hurt at home, even than abroad.

But there is nevertheless a state of opinion in England to which this general representation addresses itself. It is doubtless believed by many that the people in this country are, in the mass, a knavish, mean and vulgar people; that we are a people of infinite pretension and very little performance; that our intelligence is cunning, our virtue wordy talk, and our religion fanaticism; in short that our Democratic institutions are fast breaking down all reverence, nobleness and true culture among our people. From the high places of society in England, they cast down scorn upon this poor Republic, wallowing in the mire and filth of boundless license and vulgarity! \*

We are somewhat tempted to take that bull, John Bull, by the horns in this matter, though we should be gored by him. Nobility against Democracy then — be it so. We are ready to maintain that Democracy is yielding nobler results. We will not direct attention to the misery of the lower classes in that country; but we point directly to the higher classes. We say that much of that misery is owing to *them*. We say that they do not now, and that they never did, their duty to the people of England. We say that they have never made any contribution, proportionable to their advantages, to the wealth, improvement, learning,

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\* See Lord Sydenham's Letter.

literature, or even to the statesmanship of England. Were not their ranks continually recruited from the commonalty, they would have more than half died and ceased out of the land by this time. Their position is essentially a false and wrong position for human beings to occupy. Nay, their feeble hands cannot hold the very property that is committed to them. Were it not lashed on to them by entail, it would be scattered during the life-time of the present generation. At this very moment, more than half of the great landed estates of England are under mortgage.

We say moreover, that their position is one totally unjust and infinitely ungenerous to the rest of the people. They have a most unfair start in the race of life. There is no generous boy in any country, that would not disdain such an advantage. Suppose that such a boy were sent to any public school: and that the master, patting him on the head, should say to him, 'I know where you came from, my dear; you are the son of such or such an one; now do not trouble yourself about the tasks, my boy; though you do not work half so hard as the others, you shall have more marks than any of them; and when you run races with them, you shall always have two rods the start; so you shall be a grand boy in the school any way.' Now what would any spirited and generous boy say of this? With bursting tears of indignation, we should expect him to say, 'I do not want to be treated so; I do not want any advantage; let me take my chance with the rest.' The peerage is the great baby-nursery of England; and all the land is taxed and tasked to keep it warm and comfortable — especially for the oldest boy: and when the younger ones run out, instantly coats and cloaks — to wit, army and navy uniforms, cassocks, good secretaryships, appointments, — are provided for them by the kind and nursing public.

The good people of England especially admire this institution, and it is our especial marvel that they do. We cannot help thinking that many a noble lord laughs in his sleeve at it. Our own feeling is, that the people in that country are not elevated, but degraded by this worship of the aristocracy. We remember once asking in a company of intelligent and cultivated persons in England, whether there was anybody, any man in the country, who on being

invited by the Lord of a neighboring castle to visit him and spend a week in hunting with his Lordship, would not feel — and that too whether his Lordship was wise or simple, bad or good — would not feel, we say, sensibly gratified and very highly honored. With a shout of laughter at our simplicity, they all answered, “No, there is no such man in England!”

Give us then, we say, the chance for the noblest development of all human faculties and affections, that is found in our generous freedom, with all its faults, rather than that which is offered in the title-worshipping land of Britain!

In connection with our morality, we wish to say a word or two, in passing, of our religion. There is a total misconception in Europe on this subject. We have no established Church and no ecclesiastical revenue, and it is inferred that we have no religion. Dr. Chalmers, some years ago, came out in London with a series of lectures on the Voluntary System, and much did he delight the members of the Establishment by proving, as they supposed, that religion cannot be left to take care of itself, that it is not in this, as in worldly matters, that demand will procure supply. We should like to know what he thinks of it now, since one of the noblest voluntary contributions has been made that ever the world saw, to support him and the free churches of his new communion in breaking off from the Establishment. Be this as it may; here in America, is a perfect illustration of the permanent working of the voluntary principle. Here is a country without either establishment or endowment or revenue, or compulsion of any sort to support religion. And what do we see? More Divinity Schools are established here, more churches are builded, and larger salaries, to *the body* of the clergy, are paid in this country, than anywhere else in the world. Demand will not procure supply — the voluntary principle will not sustain religious institutions — is it said? Look at the churches that are rising around us in every city in the Union — and not one stone laid in their foundations, but what the voluntary principle lays there. But this zeal is not confined to our cities. We took a journey three or four years since, across the hills of our own and a neighboring county in Massachusetts, and we must confess that we were equally surprised and delighted with what we saw. In the first town-

ship that we came to, they were building a new church, for the convenience of a half-parish two or three miles from the old church. In the second, they were painting their church, and had replaced the old steeple with a new one. We shall be permitted to be thus minute, because these are the simple facts. In a third township — all lying adjacent to each other — they had pulled down the old church, and built a new, commodious and tasteful structure in its stead. In a fourth, not far distant, we came out upon what seemed a church in the wilderness ; all surrounded by woods, with not a dwelling-house in sight. One other building there was, indeed, hard by it, and that was a new academy — with a bell that was ringing out its matin call to the pupils, and sounded like a convent bell amidst the solitudes of the Alps. Now, let a man travel over England, and where can he find anything like this? Dr. Chalmers asks for a power that shall build churches and support their ministers. We point him to the voluntary principle. It does build churches here, and it does pay the clergy ; and it does everything else that we want done. At least it accomplishes more than is done in any other country. England with all her ecclesiastical revenues, and all the power of her hierarchy, and all the wealth of her nobles, cannot build churches nor raise funds in her waste places, nay, nor in her thronged cities, to any such extent as is done here, simply by the voluntary principle.

Passing from our morals and religion, we would say something, in the next place, of our manners. And we freely admit the high significance of this consideration. Manners really are, according to the old usages of language, matters of morality. Manners are the instant unfolding, out-flowing of a people's mind ; they are unpremeditated expressions of culture or coarseness, refinement or vulgarity, self-considering or self-forgetting, justice or injustice, kindness or coldness of heart ; they are as significant as charities or churches, as bankruptcies or battles. Show us a people whose manners are essentially bad — gross, coarse, ungentle and bad ; and we should give up the defence of it in as utter despair, as if it had neither priests nor altars, neither hospitals nor alms-houses.

We hope to show by some simple discriminations, that we have no cause so to despair of ourselves as a people ;

whatever may be said by foreign tourists who scan our manners in a month, or study our domestic usages in a steamboat. And we offer one of these discriminations, by saying in the first place, that there are certain things, not attaching to us as a people, and yet found among us, which we freely give up to "the whips and scorns" of whosoever pleases to lay upon them the lash and the sting.

The manners, for instance, of some of the members of our legislative assemblies—and must we say? of the highest—we give up; we have not a word to say in defence or extenuation. This only will we say, that if there be men who have found their way into the legislature, rather than the wrestling-ring or the cock-pit—if there be such men who have given the lie, or lifted the hand and struck the vulgar blow, in the majestic halls of public debate—if there be such men, who are not made to feel the weight of that dishonor so long as they live, we do not know, and we do not wish to know, the people and the public sentiment of this country. Ah! if they could understand with what bitter and insupportable shame, every American, in every land, hangs his head when these things are mentioned, they might pardon something of the indignation with which we write. We would that our countrymen might be aroused to consider this matter most seriously; and that when such a man presents himself before them for re-election, they would say to him, 'No, sir, we are seeking a statesman, not a pugilist.'

Again; the character of the newspaper press has been made the matter of heavy reproaches against us. It has been made the subject of elaborate articles in the foreign journals. We must think there has been some injustice, some want of discrimination in the case. From the innumerable columns of the daily press, written in haste and weariness often, it might be expected that many objectionable passages could be selected, and when these are spread out side by side, it is easy to see that a false impression may be created. But still no observing and thoughtful man among us can help admitting, unless he be restrained by the sheerest cowardice, that the character of our newspapers deserves much of the reproach that is cast upon it. Many of their editors, we believe, see and feel this as much as others. We have heard more than one of them



admit, that even the vexatious prosecutions for libel by one of our distinguished authors, have done good. If nothing of this sort were admitted, if the press stood up in its own defence, we should like to see it tried by its own testimony. Look at the party prints, for instance. What unprincipled, nefarious, outrageous, lying prints are they all, by the judgment of their opponents! But we are afraid we must press this evidence a little farther; into the barriers of the same party. Look at the rival prints of our cities. Within any period of a year or two, we know of one city at least, in which not one of them, nor one of their editors, escapes the charge of being malignant, base, indecent and reckless of all truth and principle. If this were bad taste only, it were bad enough; but certainly it is something much worse. The truth is, printing has become almost as common as talking; and we have in it, therefore, almost all the freedom of talk, without the restraints of personal presence. It is, in some sort, like an anonymous letter; always the most reckless and abusive of all writing, because of the veil that covers the attack. In short, we have come to a new era in printing. Newspaper freedom never before tried any people to the same extent; the peril of it, has come upon us unsuspected; we have fallen into the mistakes incident to a new and untried state of things; and we must look to the teachings of experience and to the corrective power of public sentiment, as they have helped us always and everywhere, to help us here.

Much good satire has been expended upon a minor immorality of our manners, in defence of which we have nothing to say but this,—that we never saw the transgression. What may be done in bar-rooms, in steamboats and railroad cars, we say not, we need not describe nor defend it; these places are out-of-doors to many people. But speaking of what passes in-doors, and from thirty or forty years' observation of this country and from a pretty wide circle of intercourse, we say, taxing our memory to the utmost, that we never saw any person spit on a carpet or parlor-floor in America. Wherever the fault lies, there let the reprobation fall; but to multitudes among us, this representation of foreign tourists, as a general one, must be a matter of as unmixed surprise, as if they had said, that we keep

bears in our parlors, or settle our fire-side discussions with fisticuffs.

With regard to our manners on the whole, while there is, doubtless, less of ease and polish than in the higher circles of Europe, where men live in and for society almost entirely, and less of a certain civility and kindliness than in the humbler classes abroad, educated for ages to deference and respect; yet there is a self-respect among our people, and a delicacy and consideration of different classes in the treatment of one another, and a freedom from mannerism, from hackneyed and heartless forms—the devices of modern etiquette or the stereotypes of old precision—all of which we value, and value as the results of our better and juster political condition. Manners are the mirror of a people's mind. And we believe that each class in this country, as compared with its respective class abroad, will be found from its relative position, to have manners more manly and sincere and more just, as between man and man; the higher less assumption, the lower less sycophancy; and the middling classes decidedly more cultivation.

We are far from anxious, however, to defend our manners in all points. We think it is easy to see that causes are at work, which for a time must have an unfavorable influence in this respect, while in the long run they are to elevate the character, and ultimately indeed the very manners of the people. The case of the nation perhaps may be illustrated by that of an individual. Compare a humble citizen of this country, rising into life and having nothing but his good heart and hand to help him, with the man of a similar class in Europe. There, he is a laborer, always to depend for work and life, for the very soil on which he labors, upon others; a serf in Russia, a poor tenant in England. He is humble, civil, obsequious, quiet; he bears in his whole manner and being the stamp of an inferiority, from which he never hopes to escape; his very dress marks him out as a member of that class; he never aspires to rise above it; he reads little, perhaps he cannot read at all; he thinks little; his ideas revolve in a narrow circle; he agitates no questions of social prudence with his superiors; he scarcely feels himself to be a man in their presence, and in the sense in which they are men; he expects to die as he has lived, and his children are to

live as he died; in fine, he is an orderly, decent, useful person, and from the high places of society they look down upon him with complacency, for with them he is never to come into competition. Now look at the humble man of America. He is a backwoods-man, if you please. He owns the soil he treads upon; he pays neither rent nor tithes nor taxes, but by his own consent and that of his peers. He acknowledges no master; he bows to no lord nor land-holder. All this may have an effect, and, for a time, a bad effect upon his manners. He is free, fearless, uncourteous, reckless perhaps in his bearing; he seems almost lawless: the experiment looks not well. The traveller from another country, accustomed to homage from this class, looks upon him with displeasure, perhaps with disgust. He speaks his mind too freely, he does not take off his hat with sufficient deference. Something rough and unamiable there *is*, perhaps, in his manner. He has not learned to vindicate himself in the right way. That which is struggling in his bosom, is not to be softened and humanized in a moment. O nature! poor human nature! — through errors and sorrows must thou work out thy welfare; and the thoughtful and considerate must wait for thee a little. Wait then, we say, and look a little farther. Does not this man become in time a far more intelligent being than his fellow in Europe; with a wider range of thought and culture? Is he not more hopeful and strong-hearted? Does he not strike his spade into the soil that is his own, with a more willing energy and a more cheerful hope? Does not the light from the opening sky of his fortunes break clearer and stronger, into the cloud of strife and passion? Yes, he rises. He rises in character, in culture, in dignity and influence. He takes a place in society as hopeless to his brother in the Old World as the possession of fiefs and earldoms. His children after him rise to the highest places in the land.

This is a picture of the man in this country. This, in some sort, is a picture of the country. Is there a man on earth, with a human heart in his bosom, that does not rejoice in the spectacle; that does not sympathize with the experiment; that does not say, God speed it? No, there is no *man*. But there are — and they are not a few — distorted from the shape and nobleness of men, who hate the experi-

ment, and wish it nothing but ill. Clothed in the robes of selfish grandeur, they would as soon think of taking their dogs into an equality with themselves, as of taking the mass of mankind. With this spirit is our quarrel. With this spirit is the quarrel of this country. And by all the hope of Christianity and faith in God, do we trust and believe that this country shall vindicate the great cause which is committed to it.

Yes, humanity—not knighthood nor nobility—the great, wide humanity has its first, perhaps its last, fair, free chance here. Sighing and broken through ages, it wandered to this new world. It struck the virgin soil, and forth, from the great heart of the land, burst the word, FREEDOM! The waters of a thousand spreading bays and shores heard it. The winds took it up, and bore it over the wide sea. It smote the sceptre of injustice and oppression. It shook the thrones of the world. This is no mere figure: it is true. There is nothing which all the crowned tyrannies of the world fear and hate, like the example of America. We say not, the *crowns* of the world. We have no hostility to royalty as such. We have no hostility to it, if it can possibly be reconciled with a just and temperate freedom: and we see no necessary incompatibility between the two. But all the injustice that *reigns*, all the tyranny, all the oppression that *reigns* in the world, has its practical controversy now, with the example of America. If we can stand, they must fall. This is the great controversy: and may God defend the right!

Would that it were possible to impress upon the people of this country, a sense of their responsibility to God and men—to the world and to the hopes of future ages. We have humbly attempted to defend our cause against the misgivings of the timid at home, and the mistakes of those who assail us from abroad. The fact is, they do not know this country. We perhaps ought to know better; and yet we, the most of us, have had no opportunity for comparing it with others. We have never seen an American traveller, who in a just and manly spirit has really looked into the state of things in Europe, that did not bless, on his return, the land of his birth. But *they*, we repeat, do not know us. They have no idea of our fortunate condition. They have no idea of the free-hold farms, the neat and

thriving villages, and the happy and improving communities that are spread all over this land. They do not know the spirit of this country. And yet we wonder that they do not observe, that almost all the great moral and humane reforms of the age have proceeded from it; Popular Education, the Temperance Reform, the Prison Discipline Reform, the kinder treatment in Asylums for the Insane, the Ministry for the Poor in Cities, and the Peace Society. Can the country be so morally bad, out of which such things have sprung?

But it is time that we should draw to a close. There has been one great example of Republican Government in ancient times, and it failed. We have stood upon its mournful ruins; and when asked there, what most impressed us in Rome, we answered, — “To stand still and think that this is Rome!” To stand indeed upon the Janiculum or upon the Gardens of Sallust, and cast your eye around you; to think of the stupendous histories that have made their theatre within the range of your vision; to think what has passed *there*, — there where that momentary glance of your eye falls, — is to submit your mind to a more awful meditation than pertains to any other spot of earth, with one only exception. But those hills upon which has been enthroned the grandeur of successive Empires — what is written upon their now desolate seats? What is the lesson taught to the world by the sublimest history in the world? No historian, we doubt, has answered this question; for the philosophy of history is yet to be written.

But, one question there is above all, which presses itself upon the American traveller, as he gazes upon that theatre of the old Roman story, and that is, — are we, who have set the great modern example of Republican freedom, to be discouraged by the failure of that ancient experiment? Does the awful shadow of the past, that forever lingers amidst those majestic ruins, point to the grand experiment that is passing on these shores, and say, ‘it is all in vain!’ — to the labors of our statesmen and sages, and say, ‘they are all in vain!’ — to the blood that has stained our hills and waters, and say, ‘it has been spilt in vain!’ This is the great question that issues from that sepulchre of Roman grandeur — shall America fail?

God forbid ! She must not, she will not fail. Christianity is here. Educated man is here. Vigor and hope, promise and prayer are here. Heaven, that spreads its fair sky over a fertile land, is with us. May it breathe its blessing into our people's heart, rich as our teeming earth ; fresh and bright as the light and breezes of our sky !



